



# First Presbyterian Church of Athens

In response to God's grace, the mission of First Presbyterian Church is to create a community where people seek the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, rejoice in worship, and go forth sharing the love of Christ with Athens and the world!

December 31, 2017  
10:00 a.m.  
First Sunday after Christmas

## GATHERING IN THE NAME OF GOD

Welcome to all who are worshipping with us. As we enter a holy space this morning, **please silence your cell phone**. The nursery is available downstairs during both services. Consult an usher if you need a personal hearing device, large-print bulletin or large-print hymnal.

The congregation is invited to speak or sing the liturgy in **bold** type.

Please sign and pass the Fellowship Pad.

### Greeting

The Lord be with you. **And also with you.**

### Prelude

Noël "When God was born at Christmas"

Jean-François Dandrieu

### Words of Welcome and Concerns of the Church

### Song of Gathering

Hymn 28, Stanza 1

**Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart, and soul, and voice;  
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;  
ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.  
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!**

### Call to Worship

Let us sing with gladness,  
for the love of God has come to dwell on earth.

**Let us shout with joy,  
for the grace of God is at work in our lives.**

Let us praise God, the giver of all blessings,  
for the very heart of God is given to us.

**Let us call out to God,  
for redemption is God's gift to us.**

\*Those who are able may stand.

Seldom has the wonder of the Incarnation been expressed so beautifully as in Hymn 309, created in the era when the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds were being codified and mindful of similar theological affirmations. The hymn is set to a plainchant melody from the Middle Ages.

Worshippers may greet each other by saying, "The peace of Christ be with you," and responding, "And also with you."

The text of the anthem is a poem by Howard Thurman set to music by North Carolina composer Mark Schweizer.

**\*Hymn 309** Of the Father's Love Begotten  
DIVINUM MYSTERIUM

**\*Call to Confession**

**\*Prayer of Confession**

**On this first Sunday after Christmas, as another year draws to a close, we look back at how we were caught up in the harried and hurried holidays and neglected those hurting people in our world; how we focused on our own lives and desires and dismissed the voices of those crying out for justice; how we delighted in our parties and decorated trees and presents and stubbornly closed our hearts to your amazing gift of love. Redeem us from our self-serving ways and restore us to fullness of faith, hope and love.**

**\*Silent Prayer**

Lord, have mercy. **Amen.**

**\*Assurance of Pardon**

**\*Congregational Response**

Hymn 56, Stanza 6

**Then let us all with one accord  
sing praises to our heavenly Lord,  
that hath made heaven and earth of nought,  
and with his blood our life hath brought.  
Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, Nowell, born is the King of Israel.**

**\*Passing of the Peace**

Since God has forgiven us in Christ, let us forgive one another.  
The peace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.  
**And also with you.**

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you.

## HEARING THE WORD OF GOD

**Congregational Prayer for Illumination**

Hymn 68, Stanza 3

**O Jesus, while the star of grace impels us on to seek your face,  
let not our slothful hearts refuse the guidance of your light to use.**

**First Lesson**

Psalm 138:3-8, page 565

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Anthem**

Christmas Joy

Mark Schweizer

When the song of the angels is stilled,  
when the star in the sky has withdrawn,  
when the kings see their prophecy rightly fulfilled,  
when the princes and shepherds have gone;  
then the true work of Christmas begins.  
To find the lost, to heal the broken hearts,  
to feed the hungry, to free the prisoner,  
to rebuild the nations, to bring peace among all people,  
to make music in the heart.  
When the song of the angels is stilled,  
then the true work of Christmas begins.

**Second Lesson** Matthew 1:18-25; 2:13-23, page 879

This is the Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

**Sermon**

The Almost Forgotten Father

Dr. Bruce Lancaster

## RESPONDING TO THE WORD OF GOD

\*Hymn 57

The Snow Lay on the Ground

VENITE ADOREMUS

\*Affirmation of Faith

from A Declaration of Faith, PCUS 1977

**God sent the promised Deliverer to his people.**

**Jesus, the long expected Savior, came into the world as a child,  
descended from David, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of  
Mary, a virgin.**

**He lived as a Jew among Jews. He announced to his people the  
coming of God's kingdom of justice and peace on earth.**

**We affirm that Jesus was born of woman as is every child,  
yet born of God's power as was no other child.**

**In the person and work of Jesus, God himself and a human life  
are united but not confused, distinguished but not separated.**

**The coming of Jesus was itself the coming of God's  
promised rule.**

**Through his birth, life, death, and resurrection,  
He brings about the relationship between God and humanity  
that God always intended.**

**Prayers of the People and the Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy  
kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the  
power and the glory, forever. Amen.**

**Presentation of Our Tithes and Offerings**

**Offertory**      What Star is This, with Beam So Bright      Alec Wyton

\*Doxology      Hymn 592

**Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;  
praise him, all creatures here below;  
praise him above, ye heavenly host;  
praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

\*Prayer of Dedication

## SENDING IN THE NAME OF GOD

\*Hymn 29

Go, Tell It on the Mountain

GO TELL IT

\*Benediction

\*Congregational Response

Hymn 68, Stanza 4

**The God the Father, God the Son,  
and Holy Spirit, three in one,  
may every tongue and nation raise  
an endless song of thankful praise.**

\*Postlude

Noël Suisse

Louis-Claude Daquin

Hymn 57 is one of the few instances when we can see how one Christmas carol has been built upon another. The refrain here quotes the original Latin refrain of O Come, All Ye Faithful, which means this hymn was created later. It is also one of the few carols that mentions Joseph.

The Affirmation of Faith is an excerpt from a contemporary statement of faith which the church adopted as "a reliable aid for Christian study, liturgy, and inspiration."

Texts and music for hymns and sung responses reprinted under OneLicense.net #A-714861

**A special word of welcome to our guests:** thank you for joining us for worship this morning. Please fill out the fellowship pad so that we may be in touch. We are delighted you are here and look forward to seeing you again.

**Nurseries for infants and toddlers**, available from 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 p.m., are located next to the Children's Ministry Suite and are accessible down the stairs in the Atrium and through the glass door.

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## NOTES ON THE SERVICE

### WORSHIP LEADERS

**Liturgist:**

Kitty Donnan

**Lay Reader:**

Kitty Donnan

### USHERS

Richard Lane (head)

### GREETERS

Marie Ledford, Tim Ledford, Mary Peace,  
Rick Simpson

### FLOWERS

The flowers are given to the glory of God and in honor of the marriage of Lucy Steele Bell and Michael Alan Johnson.

### TO AID IN WORSHIP

**If you need to leave the sanctuary** during the service, a live video feed is available in the Atrium.

**Available in the narthex or from an usher:**

- **Personal hearing receivers** usable anywhere in the sanctuary
- **Large-print** hymnals, Bibles, bulletins, and hymnsheets
- **Sermons** from the previous six weeks

### CONGREGATIONAL CARE

**Prayer requests** can be submitted to the church office, 706-543-4338, by the Prayer Request link on our church website ([firstpresathens.org](http://firstpresathens.org)) or on the prayer cards in the fellowship pads.



## Wed@First Begins January 17

Wed@First provides an opportunity to experience Christian fellowship and growth in a relaxed atmosphere. It features a delicious dinner, childrens' choirs, and classes for adults on a variety of topics beginning as early as 3:00 p.m. and ending at 7:30 p.m. Dinner opens at 5:45 p.m.

Please make dinner reservations on the Fellowship Pad, online at [firstpresathens.org](http://firstpresathens.org), or by contacting the church office **by Mondays at 12:00 p.m.** (\$8 for adults, \$5 children/students, \$20 max per family). Our after-dinner program, from 6:30-7:30 p.m., will begin with a study led by Dr. Bruce Lancaster, "How the Bible Came to Be."

### How the Bible Came to Be January 17-February 7

We profess the Bible as God's Holy Word. But just how and when and by whom were those words written down, and who decided that these words would be in the Bible? This will be a four week study of how the Bible came to be the Bible.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **HOLIDAY BENEVOLENCE MARKET Through Today**

Shop for “symbolic gifts” from 29 local nonprofits to give to friends, relatives, and teachers this Christmas. Shopping lists are available in the Atrium, or you can shop online at [holidaybenevolencemarket.org](http://holidaybenevolencemarket.org).

### **FOOD SUNDAY January 7**

Next Sunday we will collect non-perishable food items for the Athens Area Emergency Food Bank. This month they are requesting: **pork & beans, breakfast cereal, spaghetti sauce.** Thank you for donating 427 items in December and 2,504 items in Thanksgiving Food Bags. Wow!

### **2018-19 WEEKDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION Begins January 11**

Please call our director, Elaine Johnson, at 706-206-8180 to schedule a tour. Our Weekday School is celebrating 51 years of serving Athens children, ages infant through 5 years.

### **FPC MEN’S BASKETBALL Begins January 15**

If you’re interested in joining the FPC Men’s Basketball team, please contact Dan Trier at [dantrier@hotmail.com](mailto:dantrier@hotmail.com). Games will be Monday nights at 6:30, 7:15, or 8:15 and are played at Tuckston United Methodist Church on Lexington Rd.

### **COMMITMENT SUNDAY UPDATE**

The response to Commitment Sunday has been good. Thank you to everyone who has already pledged.

There are still a number of members from whom we hope to hear. It will help our church leaders plan the 2018 budget if we can receive pledge. You may turn in your pledge in the offering plate, in the church office, or you may pledge online. Thank you for prayerfully considering your pledge.

### **BATTLING A BLUE HOLIDAY SEASON?**

“Getting through the Holidays When You’ve Lost a Loved One” booklets are available in the Atrium. Pastors are also always available to talk.

### **The Wayne F. Middendorf Memorial Concert Series presents**

## **The Voices of Truth**

**January 14, 4:00 p.m.**

**First Presbyterian Church  
Sanctuary**

### **Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service January 15, 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.**

As a celebration of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s birthday and commitment to service, Athens-Clarke County is committed to making Monday, January 15, “A Day On, Not A Day Off.” The Kick-Off Celebration will be 8:30 - 9:30 a.m. at Clarke Central High School gymnasium, and volunteers will work from 9:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. at one of more than a dozen sites in our community.

To see the complete list of participating organizations and register, visit [uga.givepulse.com/group/events/118913](http://uga.givepulse.com/group/events/118913). You can also sign up with the individual agencies or the day of the event at Clarke Central High School.

For many years, FPC members have helped at the Project Safe Thrift Store, so please join fellow members there if you would like. However you sign up, please list your First Presbyterian Church affiliation. We know our members are active throughout Athens. Let others know it, too!

# SUNDAY SCHOOL RESUMES JANUARY 7

**Sunday School Classes are available for all ages and meet 9:45-10:40 a.m.**

## SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR CHILDREN

Children's Ministry Suite • Infants - 5th Grade

Director of Children's Ministries: Natalie Bishop

Nursery Volunteer & Staff Coordinator: Jennifer Abbott

**Infants** • Nursery Baby Room

Room Lead: Rita Raines

**Toddlers - Preschoolers** • Nursery Playroom

Room Lead: Mary Smith

Our toddler and preschooler curriculum is Group Publishing's Play-n-Worship. It is filled with music, activities, and storyboards that encourage little ones to interact with Bible stories.

Children's Sunday Morning Music: Garland Ryder

**Pre-Kindergarten - 5th Grade**

Our elementary aged children will experience Godly Play during Sunday School. Godly Play helps children to explore their faith through story, to gain religious language, and to grow their spiritual experience through wonder and play.

**Pre-Kindergarten - Kindergarten** • Room 127

Godly Play Guides: Susan Ferguson, Karen Phillips, Heather Roberts, Dan Trier

**1st Grade - 2nd Grade** • Room 126

Godly Play Guides: Jennifer Abbott, Mary Elizabeth McConnell, Carmen Meadows

**3rd Grade** • Room 125

Godly Play Guides: Greta Covington, Madie Fischetti, Cathi Lancaster, Chuck Roberts

**4th Grade - 5th Grade** • Room 124

Godly Play Guides: Jody Corry, Denise Horton, Matt Jones

## SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ADULTS

**Christian Issues** • Room 310

Study of the book, Judges Returning to God by Donald Baker.

Coordinator: Sandy Boyles

**Inquirers** • Moses Waddel Room

Thoughtful introspection and lively group discussion covering contemporary issues and daily Christian living.

- January 7 - DVD, The Old Testament, by Amy-Jill Levine.

- January 14 - David Alper, Congregation Children of Israel, on the class's upcoming visit to the synagogue.

Facilitators: Carl Bergmann, Carla Buss

**Living on a Prayer** • Room 303

Study of the book, Vanishing Grace by Philip Yancey. Socials outside of class.

Facilitators: Bryans, Holloways, McConnells

**New Voices** • Room 308

Study of the book, Short Stories by Jesus by Amy-Jill Levine.

Led by: Lewis Hudgins, Christine Register

**W. D. Hooper** • Room 309

Study of the Acts of the Apostles with other books of the New Testament to follow.

Led by: Richard Stone

**Wayne F. Middendorf Men's Bible Class**

Bride's Room, Tinsley Stern

Study of the Gospel of Matthew.

Teacher: John Kipp

**Women's Bible Class** • Room 301

Study of Micah, one of the minor prophets, followed by a study of Hebrews.

Teacher: Wanda Wilcox

## SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR YOUTH - The PIT

Director of Youth Ministries: Kim Ness

**MIDDLE SCHOOL – re:form**

Lounging on bean bags, our MS class will use the re:form curriculum - creative, funny animated videos and group activities - to engage in tough faith questions. Teachers: Jordan Osborne, Erik Ness

**9th GRADE CONFIRMATION – CnC (Confirm not Conform)**

This year we are using a confirmation program that celebrates questions and choices. Together, we will create a space where youth can explore the breadth of the Christian tradition, ask questions, express doubts, and discover what they truly believe. This is a year-long class with Confirmation on May 20. Teacher: Kim Ness, Robbie Bryan

**HIGH SCHOOL – d365**

The demands of high school can feel overwhelming, but finding just a few minutes each day to connect to God can help lighten the load. This year we'll take time to pause-listen-think-pray-go on a different verse from scripture using the app d365.org as our guide. On the fourth Sunday of the month, the high school class will also meet with Natalie Bishop to help plan and lead Children's Church.

Teacher: Megan Bawcum



## THIS WEEK

### Sunday, December 31

10:00 a.m. Service, Dr. Bruce Lancaster preaching, No Sunday School

### Monday, January 1 - Church Office Closed for New Year's Holiday

10:00 a.m. New Year's Day Meals on Wheels Delivery

### Tuesday, January 2

9:00 a.m. Weekday School Teacher In-Service Day

1:30 p.m. Knitting Purls, Room 304

2:00 p.m. Circle 3/4, Home of Kitty Donnan, 1050 Simonton Way

7:00 p.m. Circle 6, Home of Ann Dunn, 425 Southview Dr.

### Wednesday, January 3

9:00 a.m. Weekday School Begins

12:00 p.m. Our Daily Bread, Oconee Street United Methodist Church, 595 Oconee St.

1:00 p.m. Staff Meeting, Staff Conference Room

3:00 p.m. Bridge, Room 302

4:30 p.m. Fellowship & Evangelism Commission Meeting, Staff Conference Room

6:30 p.m. Chancel Choir Rehearsal, Room 202

### Thursday, January 4

10:00 a.m. Josephine Paine Bible Study, Staff Conference Room

12:05 p.m. Weekday School Committee Meeting, Staff Conference Room

3:30 p.m. Congregational Care Commission Meeting, Pastor's Conference Room

### Sunday, January 7 - Communion Sunday, Food Sunday

8:45 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. Services, Dr. Bruce Lancaster preaching

9:45 a.m. Sunday School resumes for all ages

## LOOKING AHEAD

**January 10** - Bookless Book Group, 11:30 a.m., Heirloom Cafe and Fresh Market

**January 12-15** - Youth Ski Trip

**January 14** - Voices of Truth Concert, 4:00 p.m.

Ecumenical Martin Luther King, Jr. Service, 5:00 p.m., First Baptist Church

**January 15** - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day of Service, 9:30 a.m.

**January 17** - Wed@First Programs and Dinner Begin

**January 23** - PTP Trip to UGA Veterinary Teaching Hospital, 9:30 a.m.

**January 24** - Bookless Book Group, 11:30 a.m., South Kitchen + Bar

**January 28** - Congregational Meeting and Lunch, 12:00 p.m.

Athens Area Presbyterian Youth Skate Night, 6:00 p.m.

## **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH SESSION**

Bruce Lancaster, Moderator    Jerris Hayes, Clerk of Session  
Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor

### **CLASS OF 2017**

Allen Crowell  
Don DeMaria  
Susan Ferguson  
Madie Fischetti  
Jerris Hayes  
Joy Holloway  
Diane Hudgins  
Mike Morris  
Jerry Rogers  
Ella Stewart

### **CLASS OF 2018**

Joe Attaway  
David Cole  
Jason Doornbos  
Sue Gray  
Mark Harrison  
Denise Horton  
Christine Register  
Arlene Shirley  
Harry Shuford  
Richard Stone

### **CLASS OF 2019**

Robbie Bryan  
Greta Terrell Covington  
DeeAnn Cox  
Mary Havick  
Joe Hermanowicz  
Richard Lane  
Mary Peace  
Lawton Stephens  
Dan Trier

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## **FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH STAFF**

Dr. Bruce Lancaster, Interim Senior Pastor  
Dr. Carol Strickland, Associate Pastor  
Dr. John Kipp, Parish Associate  
The Reverend Bob Googe, Parish Associate  
Dr. John Coble, Director of Music and Organist  
Mrs. Kim Ness, Director of Youth Ministries  
Mrs. Natalie Bishop, Director of Children's Ministries  
Mrs. Elaine Johnson, Director of Weekday School  
Mr. Roger Burbage, Church Administrator  
Ms. Lucy Bell, Administrative Assistant  
Ms. Nan Powell, Communications Specialist  
Mrs. Jennifer Sunderlin, Receptionist/Administrative Assistant  
Mrs. Laura McHugh, Accountant  
Mrs. Tiffany Greene, Weekday School Administrative Assistant  
Ms. Jennifer Abbott, Nursery Volunteer & Staff Coordinator  
Mrs. Charlotte Chromiak, Children's Music Assistant  
Mr. Chuck Hunt, Sunday Morning Manager  
Mr. Willie "Buc" Collins, Sexton  
Mrs. Madeline Van Dyck, Parish Nurse

### **STUDENT INTERNS**

Ms. Jordan Osborne, Youth Ministry Intern  
Ms. Yamini Pulusu, Website Technician

### **WADDEL FELLOWS**

Mr. Wesley Bowden, Congregational Care  
Mr. Christian Cordon, Mission & Outreach  
Ms. Nettie Jester, Youth Ministry

**PLEASE SEE [FIRSTPRESATHENS.ORG](http://FIRSTPRESATHENS.ORG)**

**FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH.**